DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 943 UD 028 055

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TITLE Evaluating Multicultural Education.
INSTITUTION Eastern Illinois Univ., Charleston.
PUB DATE Jan 91
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Differences; Higher Education; *Institutional Evaluation; Learning Modules; Multicultural Education; Secondary Education; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Teacher Education; Tests; *Textbook Evaluation

ABSTRACT

This learning module comprises three activities that provide the opportunity to evaluate: (1) one's own level of cultural awareness; (2) cultural bias in textbooks; and (3) aspects of multiculturalism in a secondary school. The first activity, "Your Own Cultural Awareness," uses "Morgan's Central West Virginia Cultural Awareness Quiz" to demonstrate the experience of minority group students faced with tests that have been standardized on the white, middle-class experience and vocabulary. The 20-item multiple-choice quiz has been standardized on the experience of a poor, white Appalachian person. The second activity, "Biases in Textbooks," requires the evaluation of a college or secondary school textbook on the basis of the following criteria: (1) invisibility; (2) stereotyping; (3) selectivity and imbalance; (4) unreality; (5) fragmentation or isolation; and (6) language. The third activity, "Multicultural Life in Today's School," requires a site visit to a secondary school with at least a 20 percent minority group student enrollment and observing the following: (1) teacher expectations; (2) interracial and intergender interactions; (3) seating plans; (4) racial and gender composition of the teaching staff and administration; and (5) evidence of a multicultural curriculum. Written communication and cultural exchange with a secondary school student is suggested as an alternative activity. A three-item bibliography and the answers to the quiz are appended. (FMW)

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EVALUATING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by

Robert N. Barger

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ASEP MODULE 3-G (470)

ALTERNATE SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

You have already met the topic of multicultural education in a previous module entitled "The Basics of Multicultural Eduction." Now you will have a chance to do a bit of evaluation in connection with this topic. You will engage in activities which will allow for evaluation in three areas. The first area will concern your own cultural awareness. The second will look at textbooks in order to detect the possible presence of bias. The third will focus on the broad spectrum of multicultural life as it exists in a "real world" school today.

YOUR OWN CULTURAL AWARENESS

Have you ever heard the saying "No one is a good judge in his/her own case"? It is meant to make the point that we are not always in the best position to know ourselves or our relation to others around us. For instance, how well do you think you know the culture of some of your fellow Americans of a different race, or of a group living in a different part of the country? Taking the latter case, if you were suddenly transplanted to Central West Virginia how knowlegeable do you think you would be about the culture there? You can find out now by taking the Morgan's Central West Virginia Cultural Awareness Test.

MORGAN'S CENTRAL WEST VIRGINIA

CULTURAL AWARENESS QUIZ

You may be proud of your I.Q. score or your S.A.T. or

A.C.T. scores. But such tests largely assume a common white middle-class cultural background and a standard vocabulary. These assumptions are not valid for all populations.

This quiz has been designed to test your awareness of the cultural background of central West Virginia. Each item is related to the life experiences and heritage of the people in this mountainous region. Human awareness is usually gained from association with people and from immersion in their milieu, not from formal written textbooks.

When we consider that many tests (both commercially prepared and teacher-made) used in public schools today are generally standardized on the white middle-class experience, we can begin to appreciate the overwhelming difficulties some poor white Appalachian youngsters face in taking such tests.

Here the situation has been reversed. You are asked to take a quiz based on culturally related items with which you likely have limited first-hand acquaintance. (Keep in mind that your score on this quiz will be used as a basis for various school purposes such as grade placement and promotion).

If you do not happen to pass (70% or better), it will be concluded that you are culturally different! The real question is -- Do you know as much about the poor Appalachian white person's

world as he or she is expected to know about yours?

1. A "ramp" refers to

   a. a fish
   b. an animal
   c. a plant
   d. a drink

2. Which word does not belong?

   a. holler
   b. valley
   c. cove
   d. river

3. A "gully washer" refers to a

   a. river
   b. laundress
   c. bathtub
   d. cloudburst

4. A "crick" refers to a

   a. cricket
   b. spinal pain
   c. children's game
   d. small stream

5. The most common food eaten in central West Virginia is

   a. cornbread and beans
   b. potatoes and pork
   c. turnips and bread
   d. meat and potatoes

6. The average height of a coal mine is

   a. 5 ft.
   b. 3 1/2 ft.
   c. 2 ft.
   d. 6 1/2 ft.

7. "Slag" refers to

a. coal waste
b. slate
c. coal waste and slate
d. none of the above

8. What is a "spreader" used with?

a. horse
b. fertilizer
c. toy
d. game

9. What is a "jack-leg"?

a. preacher
b. tool
c. cripped person
d. alcoholic drink

10. What is a "granny woman"?

a. maternal grandma
b. oldest woman with the family name
c. midwife
d. none of the above

11. "Quince" is a

a. child's game
b. fruit
c. drink
d. dance

12. A "cakewalk" is an

a. easy job
b. easy girl
c. Sunday walk
d. social event

13. Which term does not belong?

a. Redbone
b. Bluetick
c. Black and Tan
d. Collie

14. Which is not an alcoholic drink?

a. White lightning
b. Mountain dew
c. lights-out
d. stump water

15. Which word does not belong?

a. swamp
b. sluice
c. stoop
d. bog

16. Prayer meetings in Methodist churches are held

a. Sunday afternoons
b. Wednesday nights
c. Friday nights
d. none of the above

17. Which of these is not a "burg" in central West Virginia?

a. Sheepnose
b. Jonathan
c. Wolf River
d. Hogshead

18. A "poke" refers to

a. a card game
b. a bag
c. a fight
d. a dance

19. Which is not a tea?

a. clover
b. mint
c. nettle
d. sassafras

20. Who was the greatest basketball player to attend West Virginia University?

a. Earl Monroe
b. Bill Russell
c. Rick Barry
d. Jerry West

The answers to the Quiz appear at the end of this module.

BIASES IN TEXTBOOKS

Americans tend to believe what they read. That is why it is important to insure that textbooks and other classroom materials do not subtly mislead students about cultural matters.

There are basically six types of biases that can occur in texts. These biases are discussed in Chapter 9 of Gollnick & Chinn (1983) and may be summarized as follows:

1. Invisibility. The bias of invisibility occurs when minority cultures are absent from, or underrepresented in, texts. The minorities which are most often the victim of invisibility are women, racial groups, handicapped people, and older people. A rule of thumb for adequate representation might be that minorities should appear in texts in proportion to their numbers in the general American population. An even greater representation might be appropriate in order to correct for the

absence or underrepresentation of minorities in texts until recent years. Text materials may be examined for invisibility bias simply by counting the number of references or graphic illustrations which include minorities.

2. Stereotyping. Stereotyping occurs when fixed roles or characteristics are automatically assigned to minority groups. The bias in effect denies variety or diversity to members of those groups and limits expectations in their regard to the stereotyped behavior of traits. An example of stereotyping would be the portrayal of Mexican-Americans only as migrant workers.

3. Selectivity and Imbalance. This bias occurs when issues and situations are interpreted only from the perspective of the majority culture. A prime example would be the conveying of an implication that the ideal American is white, male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and young. This might be done in a textbook by consistently showing a young white male in a leadership role.

4. Unreality. The bias of unreality misrepresents historical or contemporary situations. For instance, one might get the idea from some texts that Native Americans (Indians) were more real in the past than they are today, or that people in wheelchairs are not active participants in all aspects of society -- including sports.

5. Fragmentation or Isolation. This bias is present when minorities are treated separately from the mainstream of American experience. This occurs in texts when minority activity in a particular topic area is segregated in a part of a chapter or even treated in a separate chapter. The negative message conveyed

is that minority experience is not an integral part of American history or the American milieu.

6. Language. This bias can take a couple of forms. It can be expressed in the use of only, or mainly, Anglo names for characters in the text. A much more common manifestation of language bias, however, is the use of sexist language. An example of this would be the use of the male-gender pronoun whenever a pronoun form is employed.

Are you ready to see how skilled you are at detecting these biases? Select a college or high school textbook to examine. Use the six categories listed above as the basis for your examination. Write a report on the results of your investigation.

MULTICULTURAL LIFE IN TODAY'S SCHOOL

So far in this module you have been asked to take a test you had little chance of passing, and to examine a textbook for evidence of possible cultural bias. Now you will be asked to look more broadly at multicultural life in a "real world" school. The fullest and most rewarding experience will be available to you if you can travel to a secondary school where there are at least 20% minority students in attendance. Consult your ASEP advisor about the possibility of arranging such a visit. If you can participate in such a trip (either one sponsored by ASEP or one arranged "on your own"), complete Activity A below.

If you find that you cannot travel to a school having

at least 20% minority enrollment, then complete Activity B below.

Activity A: Before you visit the school with a significant number of minority students, make arrangements to be the guest of one particular minority student in that school whom you will accompany for the whole day or a significant part of the day. Write a report on your experience at the school, responding to the following questions:

1. What did you notice about teacher expectations for students? Did these seem to vary on the basis of race or gender, or did they seem to vary simply on an individual student basis...or did they vary among students at all?

2. What did you notice about interracial and intergender interactions among the students in the classroom, the cafeteria, the halls?

3. What did you notice about seating plans in the classroom?

4. What did you notice about the racial and gender composition of the teaching staff and the racial and gender composition of the administration?

5. What evidence did you find of a multicultural curriculum (lesson topics, texts, audiovisuals, bulletin boards, displays, etc.)?

6. What was the most important insight you gained from your visit?

7. On the whole, how did you feel about the visit?

Activity B: If you are not able to visit a school having at least 20% minority students, arrange to engage in written communication with a secondary school class in a distant school having a significant number of minority students. Do this by exchanging letters, pictures, artwork, videotapes, and/or questions about cultural matters in that school to be answered by students there. This exchange should continue until you know enough about the dominant minority culture in that school to write a report about it, based on your exchange of materials. Then write the report, telling what you have learned about the culture in that school and if that culture is different from the culture of schools in your area.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING:

Banks, James A. (1981). Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Bennett, Christine (1989). Comprehensive Multicultural Education, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Gollnick, Donna M., and Chinn, Philip C. (1983). Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society. St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Co.

The answers to the Morgan's Central West Virginia Cultural Awareness Quiz are:

1. c	6. b	11. b	16. b
2. d	7. c	12. d	17. d
3. d	8. a or b	13. d	18. b
4. b or d	9. a	14. c	19. c
5. a	10. c	15. c	20. d